Guidelines for Analysis of Credentials to be Included on COOL

Relatedness Determination Guidelines

Relatedness Determination (RD) refers to the identification of certifications relevant to a Navy rating/designator/occupation. Civilian occupations related to Navy ratings/designators/occupations are identified along with relevant certifications. Relatedness Determinations lay the foundation for the rest of the data found within a rating/designator/occupation page.

Initial RD data can be generated by the Naval Education and Training Command (NETC) Learning Center or the Credentials Program Office. Detailed analysis of each RD is typically submitted to the NETC Learning Center responsible for the rating being reviewed, as well as the Enlisted Community Manager and Subject Matter Experts (SMEs).

An overview of the key steps taken to conduct an RD is provided below.

1. **Research Navy Specific Rating, Designator, and Occupation.** The first step in the RD process is to better understand the duties and preparatory training so that the rating, designator, or occupation can be matched to civilian jobs and credentials. Several methods are used to research the applicable rating, designator, or occupation, including discussions with subject matter experts and review of:

     - Navy Job Task Analyses (JTA) data, if available;
     - Navy Duty descriptions
     - Navy Occupational Standards; and
     - Navy training materials.

2. **Link Civilian Jobs.** Linkages between a rating, occupation, or designator and a civilian job are established through the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) civilian occupational scheme. Analysts analyze available background information on the rating/occupation/designator (see #1 above) and assess it against various dimensions of the O*NET classification scheme.

3. **Link to Civilian Credentials (National Certifications and Federal Licenses) and Make Initial Recommendation for Credential Type.** After civilian jobs have been linked to the rating/occupation/designator, linkages are made to civilian credentials. A number of factors must be considered in making these linkages, including whether the agency and credential meet the established broad requirements for a quality credential and what the credential type is as it relates to the specific rating/occupation/designator – directly related, skill related, or advanced/specialized/other.

     Credentials are reviewed by the analyst for appropriateness, and one of five outcomes are possible: (1) the credential is directly related to the rating/occupation/designator; (2) the credential is related to a skill obtained through Navy training; (3) the credential addresses an advanced/other skill related to the rating/occupation/designator (called Advanced/Specialized

and Other credentials); (4) the credential is not related to the rating/occupation/designator or underlying skills; or, (5) the credential did not meet the overall guidelines for inclusion (e.g., rather than being a nationally recognized certification program, the program is determined to be a certificate program, which typically signifies only course completion.) Credentials classified in outcomes 1 through 3 will be included on the site.

4. **COOL Credentialing Standards Documentation**. In order to ensure a standardized process is followed, and to ensure the validity of a credentialing agency (or their certifications/licenses), the COOL Credential Standards Documentation may be submitted to the credentialing agency upon initial review and annual reviews.

5. **Department of Labor (DoL) and Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA)**. RD consideration of potential civilian credentials may also include a review of credentials recognized by the DoL and DVA.

Note: The analysis and possible posting of credentials, civilian occupational data, and other data:

- Is **not** commonly performed at the request of the credentialing agency or industry
- **May be** performed at the request of the DoD, DoN, or the service member
- **May be** performed if the credential is reasonably attainable by service members in the related military occupation, as a direct result of existing Service training and/or duties performed in the military occupation
- **May be** performed if the credential is of best cost/best value to the Government and service member
- Does not imply an endorsement by the U.S. Navy or U.S. Army
- Does not ensure the U.S. Navy or U.S. Army will support funding of the credential
- Is at the needs of the U.S. Navy or U.S. Army and subject to change at the needs of the Service, without notification/coordination of the credentialing agency

COOL Credentialing Standards Documentation

In order to ensure a standardized process is followed, and to ensure the validity of a credentialing agency (or their certifications/licenses), criteria must be meet and guidelines followed. The COOL Credential Standards Documentation may be submitted to the credentialing agency upon initial review and annual reviews. Prior to inclusion on COOL, a certifying organization must meet the decision criteria outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Decision Criteria for Selecting Appropriate Credentialing Agencies

- If a credential has been accredited by one of the two national accrediting bodies – National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) or American National Standards Institute (ANSI) – it can be included on the COOL web site.
- If a credential has been recognized by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) or U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs GI Bill (as posted on VA WEAMS website), it can be included on the COOL web site.

- If a credential has not been approved by NCCA, ANSI, or DOL, VA, the following criteria are used as general guidelines for selecting credentials for inclusion on the COOL web site (these criteria are high level criteria required by NCCA and ANSI for accreditation):
    o Credential results from an assessment process
    o Credential typically requires some amount of professional/work experience
    o Awarded by a third-party, standard-setting organization (credentialing organization does not require that candidates complete the organizations' training/education program for certification eligibility)
    o Indicates mastery/competency as measured against a defensible set of standards, usually by application or exam
    o Standards set through a defensible, industry-wide process (e.g., job analysis) that results in an outline of required knowledge and skills
    o Has ongoing requirements in order to maintain credential (i.e., recertification)
    o Attainment or maintenance of the credential does not require membership in the organization

If a determination is made to include a certifying agency on COOL, or to continue to include the certifying agency on COOL, the agency may be asked to complete the COOL Credentialing Standards Documentation (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Sample COOL Credentialing Standards Document

COOL Credentialing Standards Documentation

Certification Title:

Certification Agency / Association / Body:

Background:

The U.S. Army and Navy Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL) initiatives are designed to promote civilian certifications for Army and Navy military personnel. Information linking hundreds of military occupations to civilian certifications is made available on the Army and Navy COOL web sites:

- Navy COOL – https://www.cool.navy.mil
- Army COOL – https://www.cool.army.mil

Your agency is being considered for inclusion on the COOL web sites.

In order to ensure that service members are linked to quality certification programs, we ask each credentialing agency to complete a brief checklist attesting to the quality of their program. This checklist was developed based on generally accepted accreditation standards for personnel certification programs, including the International Standard - ISO/IEC 17024 and guidelines set forth by the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE).

For the purposes of this document, the association or agency which grants certification to candidates will be referred to as the credentialing body (CB).

Instructions:

1. Please address each of the standards in Table 1, and check the box in the middle of the row if the standard or requirement has been met.

2. Use the space provided in the right-hand column to provide the following information:
   a. If the standard has been met, please specify the documentation that could be provided (if needed)
   b. If the standard has NOT been met, please specify the reason(s) for this. Also, if applicable, address the steps that will be implemented (along with a timeline) so that the standard will be achieved in a reasonable period of time.

   If additional space is needed, feel free to add on additional pages to this document.

3. Please submit your name and contact information in the area provided at the conclusion of this document, so that an analyst may contact you with any questions.

4. Once completed, please email the document to [INSERT e-mail address]. If you have any questions, please contact [INSERT POC]. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

The posting of the CB's credentials on Navy or Army COOL:

- Does not imply an endorsement by the U.S. Navy or Army
- Does not ensure the U.S. Navy or Army will support funding toward the credential
- Is at the needs of the U.S. Navy or Army and is subject to change based on the needs of the U.S. Navy

Name:	**Phone:**		
Title / Position:	**Email:**		

	Standard / Requirement	**Met?**	**Comments / Documentation**
1	The credentialing body (CB) will not require the candidate to have completed training that is solely provided by the CB.		
2	If the CB does provide an educational or training program, it must not imply that it is the only approved program as a requirement for the credential.		
3	If the CB does provide an educational or training program, those individuals responsible for training must not be affiliated with or responsible for the development of credentialing standards or the approval process.		
4	The credential exam fee must not be bundled with non-examination-related costs (i.e. training materials, membership cards, organizational magazines, etc...).		
5	The CB must document the specific tasks, knowledge, job duties, and / or skills that are purportedly being measured by the assessment process (e.g. exam, portfolio review, requirements review) associated with the exam.		
6	The CB must document the development of the exam or assessment, specifying psychometric processes.		
7	The content areas of the assessment or exam must be directly aligned to information gathered during a job/task analysis, role delineation, and / or subject-matter expert consultation.		
8	Evidence regarding the validity and reliability of the assessment / exam scores must be documented.		
9	The CB must publish all assessment / examination processes and procedures required of the candidate.		
10	The certification/license must be recognized and in use by industry/organizations other than the CB's organization.		
11	The CB must be accessible and responsive to both applicant and certification holder (i.e. Internet, Phone, Email).		
12	Membership in an association affiliated with the CB will not be required for initial certification/license.		
13	The certification/license must have a time limit or Continuing Education requirements, with options for recertification and/or maintenance clearly outlined.		
14	The credential(s) offered must not be tailored towards or centric to military service members. It must fulfill a need in the civilian workforce.		

Please Note: The intent of this document is NOT to change the business model of the CB. This is merely an assessment tool to help the U.S. Navy identify which credentials may meet their needs. This document should not infer/imply that the U.S. Navy is directing CB's to make changes to their business model or practice.

Comparability Analysis

Identifying gaps between military training and civilian credentialing requirements along with resources available to fill those gaps improves a Sailors' ability to attain civilian credentials. This process is called Comparability Analysis or Gap Analysis.

Due to the prevalence of credentialing in the civilian work force, it is not uncommon for there to be over 20 credentials related to a specific rating/occupation/designator. However, of these, typically only five to seven are directly related to the duties performed by Sailors in the rating/occupation/designator or to the underlying skills they attain through military training and experience.   The remainder would be considered advanced or specialized certifications.

A key component of the COOL web site is the inclusion of the results of comparability analyses detailing any gaps between civilian credentialing requirements and Navy training for credentials that are determined to be most directly related or skill related. The comparability analyses also provide information on how Service members can fill these gaps—either through additional education or training or independent study.

The comparability analysis process ensures the efficient collection of all required inputs, including civilian credentialing requirements, military training requirements, and information on programs available to facilitate credentialing. The process also allows for conducting comprehensive analysis of military training against civilian credentialing requirements and the identification of any credentialing gaps. Finally, for quality control purposes, a review component is included to ensure that the Navy Learning Centers have an opportunity to review and provide feedback on the results of the analysis. Figure 1 provides an overview of the Comparability Analysis process. The numbers in parentheses correspond to the numbers of each activity shown in the diagram. It includes the following activities:

- Request Enabling and Terminal Objective (EOs/TOs) (1a)
- Review EOs/TOs and selected training material; Automate Key Training Topic Areas (as required) (1b-1c)
- Review potentially relevant certifications and automate key requirements (as required) (2a-2b)
- Gather Related Information (3a-3b)
- Conduct Skills Assessment (4)
- Post Completed Analyses on the Test Server (5)
- Forward for Review/Comments (6)
- Make recommended changes and Post to Live Site (7-9)

Figure 3: Comparability Analysis Process
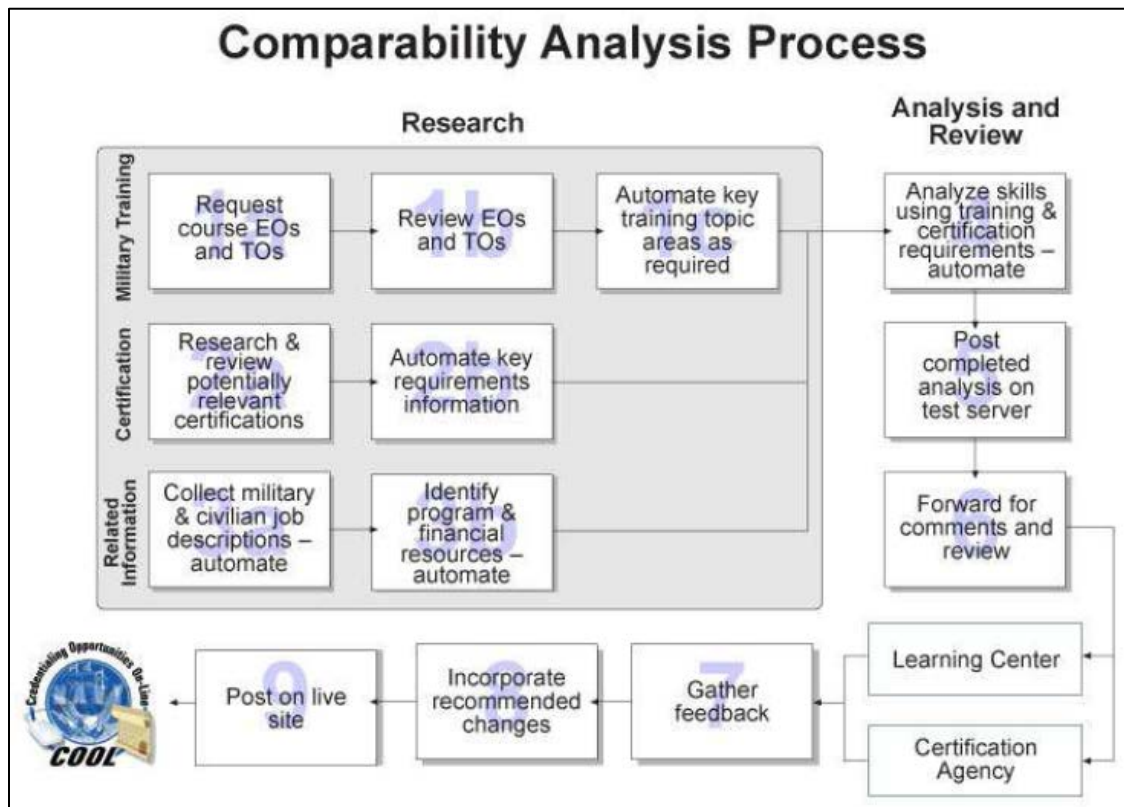
Funding Business Rules

More than 1,500 occupational credentials are currently eligible for Navy funding…

The Navy's Credentials Program Office funds for credentials that have been mapped on Navy COOL with the "Navy Bucks" icon. The   (Navy$) resource icon identifies a credential that has been approved for Navy funding via a pre-paid voucher or pre-approved reimbursement. The voucher covers the cost of the examination, re-certification, or maintenance fee.

More than 1,500 occupational credentials are currently eligible for Navy funding, based on an 80 percent or greater match to a corresponding rating. Qualifying credentials are available for Sailors in every Navy rating, and are identified on the Navy Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL) web site, https://www.cool.navy.mil.

Requests for exam funding will be handled on a first come, first served basis. Interested Sailors should take advantage of funding as soon as practicable as the program is subject to funding constraints as the year progresses. Sailors must have a minimum of one year remaining on their enlistment prior to receiving pre-paid vouchers or reimbursements. Additional guidance, such as reimbursement information and eligibility guidelines, is provided on the "Costs and Resources" page of the Navy COOL web site.

Those credentials with the "Navy Bucks" icon may have been mapped to Navy Job Duty Task Analysis (JDTA) for the particular rating at 80% or greater, or meet a critical skill of the particular rating. Those credentials with the "Navy Bucks" icon may have been mapped to Navy rating training (e.g. 'A' School) for that particular rating at 80% or greater, or fill a critical training gap of that particular rating. Those credentials meeting the 80% or greater criteria are eligible to have the exams funded. [Note: the 80% criteria was set by the Vice Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Board of Directors in 2005]

Not all credentials displayed on Navy COOL are funded by the Navy's Credentials Program Office. Those that are not funded may display additional funding resources (e.g., GI Bill) available to the Sailor. Those credentials displayed on Navy COOL without the "Navy Bucks" icon may still be of value to Sailors performing specialized duties within their rating, but not to the 80% or more degree required to meet Navy funding.

Under certain circumstances, credentials that were previously funded (i.e., had the "Navy Bucks" icon) are no longer funded (i.e., the "Navy Bucks" icon is removed). This may happen at any time. Some (not all inclusive) examples are:

- credentialing agency changes its objectives and no longer meets the 80% criteria;
- credentialing agency changes its objectives and now meets the 80% criteria;
- a rating merger or disestablishment and now the credential no longer meets the 80% criteria;
- a rating merger or disestablishment and now the credential meets the 80% criteria;
- the credentialing agency cannot meet the Navy's funding requirements, therefore we cannot fund the exam (i.e. only takes cash at the door from the member…or only accepts checks);
- the credentialing agency now has a means for Navy to fund for the exam (usually Visa, MasterCard);
- the Navy Learning Center or Enlisted Community Manager changes its recommendation for funding, or not funding, the credential;
- Navy training has changed and no longer meets the 80% criteria;
- Navy training for the rating has changed and now meets the 80% criteria;
- the credentialing agency bundles training with the exam and is unable to, or unwilling to, unbundle the costs so the Navy pays just the exam fees;
- etc…

Note: The funding of credentials:

- Is not performed at the request of the credentialing agency or industry
- May be performed at the request of the DoD, DoN, or eligible service members (consistent with policy and program business rules)
- May be performed if the credential is reasonably attainable by service members in the related military occupation, as a direct result of existing Service training and/or duties performed in the military occupation
- May be performed if the credential is of best cost/best value to the Government and service member

- May be cross-checked against the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) GI Bill to ensure pricing is equal to or better than DVA recognized costs, as well as DVA funding options are available to the veteran
- Does not include funding of training materials, study guides, memberships, ID cards, travel expenses, seminars, and other materials/activities
- Does not imply an endorsement by the U.S. Navy or U.S. Army
- Does not ensure the U.S. Navy or U.S. Army will support funding of the credential
- Is at the needs of the U.S. Navy or U.S. Army and subject to change at the needs of the Service, without notification/coordination of the credentialing agency